

# UPSTAIRS BULLETIN

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## THANKSGIVING

The best things are nearest; breath in your nostrils, light in your eyes, flowers at your feet, duties at your hands - the path of God just before you. Then do not grasp at the stars, but to life's plain, common work as it comes, certain that daily duties and daily bread are the sweetest things in life.

- From my Step Mother's Diary.

CHICAGO has had more than its share of adverse publicity, so it is a real treat to hear the praise the Chicago Symphony Orchestra has been receiving abroad. Artistically, the city has many things to be proud of. The Lyric Opera, now in its 20th Year has given us many excellent productions, getting better each year. (discounting Maria Tallchief's dreadful balletin "La Favorita"). The Fine Arts Quartet has had yearly tours on the continent with marked success. The Art Institute ranks with the world's finest art palaces and there are many other museums and libraries of note in our city. We have all grown accustomed to the Picasso and now we have a Chagall and two Calders to argue about until we are used to them. All these works of art are bigger than all out doors.

Chicago has always been slow to know its own values and to appreciate its prized possessions. The Symphony was equally great under Frederick Stock but unfortunately not world traveled. Almost half of what we know as modern in music was first presented to the Chicago public by Stock. Fritz Reiner's reign was also important artistically. The Chicago Civic Opera Company had conductors like Bruno Walter, Egon Pollock and Emil Cooper. For singers they had the really greats - Mary Garden, Claudio Muzio, Rose Raisa, Tito Schipa, John Charles Thomas (imagine the stupidity of Maria Callas suggesting that the baritone aria in La Traviata be cut -- especially to anyone having heard Thomas), Martinelli, Supervia, Kipnis and the lovely Edith Mason. All were an important

part of Chicago's musical background. And while we cannot claim Schnabel, Serkin, Horowitz (the last two had their first American concerts in Chicago), Geiseking and Schwarzkopf, all were taken into the hearts of Chicagoans and were yearly recitalists. Dance-wise, the City is like Ireland and its babies, it has to export them to other countries. To name a few - Anna Ludmilla, Doris Humphrey, Pearl Lang, John Kriza, Ruth Ann Koesun, Carol Lawrence, Charles Bennett, James Moore, Bob Fosse, and John Neumeier -- all began here in Chicago.

All of which ads up to the fact that no native of our city need say they have not had the exposure to culture - it is all about you and costs you little to partake of it.

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## JAMES STANLEY MOORE

One of our "exports" recently came back to Chicago as Artistic Director of The Royal Swedish Ballet. James Moore had first worked with the Swedes as Jerone Robbins' assistant staging "les Noces" for that company. After a year of floundering with Erik Bruhn and a seson with no director, the Company itself requested James. His two years has been a miracle of rebirth according to John and Judy Svalander who saw the company during those bad years.

James came to our school at the age of 17, in July of 1948 from the late Margeurite Neumeister in Rockford. He was a scholarship student from that time up until 1954 when he finally left for New York to stay.

During the interval he was one of the four SC boys engaged by Hassard Short for the New York Musical "Seventeen" which opened April 15, 1951. After that run he was in service until December of 1953 when he received his discharge. Returning to the School at that time, he studied up through the sum-

mer course of '54...then leaving for New York.

In SC programs, (as well as Page-Stone), he appeared in "That Daring Young Man", "Ditties", "The Bararian Brawl", and "Set of Three". In 1950 when Page-Stone went to Paris, Page vacillated to the point of madness whether or not to take James and Bill Maloney and I ran the risk of jeopardizing a long friendship by insisting that they go. Much more could be said about his career in the Musical field and his years with Ballet Theatre.

Three SC Alumni will be appearing soon at the Auditorium in three widely different groups. The first will be NERRISA BARNES (Thea) with the Alvin Ailey Dance Company. Next will be NAOMI SORKIN with the Eliot Feld Company and in the spring PEGGY LYMAN with the Martha Graham Company. It was indeed good news to hear that the American Ballet Theatre had at long last made BONNIE MATHIS a Principal Dancer. Bonnie had been performing as such ever since she went into the Company. Who is there that can understand any of these rich women that run Ballet Companies. The Local effort seems up for grabs with a Board of directors playing Ping-Pong with dancers who have wasted many good years working towards this end. This is exactly why we as a school are opposed to good dancers trained here remaining in the city. When a longgone Bal-lerina can be allowed the use of the local TV stations to air her asinine opinions. The dreadful ballet in "La Favorita" is an example of that advice. We were sorry to hear of BOB FOSSE's collapse and have heard since that the rehearsals for "Chicago" will resume in February. The show was to star Chita Rivera and Gwen Verdun. PATRICK CUMMINGS is Fosse's as-sistant on that show. PAT & LINDA HEIM were here for about nine days while she was appearing in a Trade Show at McCormic Place. The next issue of the Bulletin will be the first of Vol-ume 15 and we hope to have an article by ELISABETH WINEBERG on the Federal Theatre days in Chicago.

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1928 - 1929

Sir Rudolph Bing's Memoirs "5000 Nights at the Opera" was a completely absorbing book, full of stories of his triumphs, disasters, feuds and friendships in Opera. Many of the earlier names of conductors, directors and

singers mentioned in the book were artists I had worked with in the old Chicago Civic Opera from 1928 until the Chicago City Opera Company in 1942. In the years I worked in Opera the name changed from Chicago Civic to Chicago Grand to Chicago Opera to the Chicago City Opera.

The old Chicago Civic Opera Company was one of the great companies of the world. That Company had its own roster of artists who sang only in Chicago, Buenos Aires, La Scala and the important German companies; not as today where they go from one company to another within a season. During my four years with the Civic the Company presented over 60 operas with many prominent conductors - among them Georgio Polacco, Emil Cooper, Egon Pollock, Bruno Walter, Walter Damrosch and Fausto Clewa.

The Civic Opera tours covered the country from coast to coast and during those four years played in 34 American cities. The company maneuvered about in two special trains with a cast of 300 people. There were no substitute casts for the tours. The important starts, Mary Garden, Claudio Muzio, Rosa Raisa, Alexander Kipnis, Tito Schipa and Giovanni Martinelli all toured with the group. In the spring of 1929, the company presented 17 operas in Boston during a two week season there. For many years Boston was always the first stop on the tour.

My first season in 1928 was the final season at the Auditorium Theatre and it created a curious feeling of unrest within the company. We all regreted leaving the venerated historic theatre where so many famous incidents had taken place. As uncomfortable as it was with the huge casts back stage, only the stage hands wanted to leave for the Wacker Drive house.

My first performance of that 1928 season was October 31st in "Carmen" with the American debut of Maria Olszewska, the Austrian soprano as Carmen and Allice Mock as Michaela. As to Olszewska, there was a great diversity of opinion as to whether she was a great Carmen. Critics said "she was 'Spanische and not quite Espagnole". However, to me she was great and by the end of the year most everyone agreed, as she added role after role that season. When we came out in the ballet that opening night in the last act I was not quite

as thrilled as I thought I might be. I seemed for all the world that I was just one of a group of troubadours serenading Maria Yurieva on a Spanish square, the stage seemed so enormous, the lights so bright that we were not at all conscious of an audience. Swoboda's ballet began with the Serenade from the L'Arleisene Suite with the eight boys carrying mandolins serenading and posturing around Yurieva and working up into a frenzy with the Farandole at the end of the ballet. Today the ballet is sadly missed in "Carmen". The past few performances of this opera have been mighty sad ones, compared to one I remember with the enchanting Conchita Supervia in the lead role.

I was young and inexperienced that first year and Swoboda, the ballet master, was kind and understanding and needless to say I worshipped the ground he walded on. He was a beautiful specimen of humanity and one of the great dancers of his time, and I think now, a great choreographer. For at this time the choreographer was allowed to do his own ballet without interference with the stage director. Today, the director does his work and consequently, the ballet today in opera is completely emasculated. The dancers are merely supers. I have clear memories of his work in "La Gioconda", "Lucia", his enchanting ballet in the Kermese scene of "Faust" his elaborate and intricate ballet in "Aida" using contrasting groups in black, terra cota and cobalt green in frieze patterns. These ballets had charming pantomines interlaced into the opera with meaningfulness and taste.

In the middle of that season, opera ballet intrigue decided to dispose of Swoboda and Yurieva and it was commonly known that a third rate conductor, William Tyroler, was paid to ruin a performance of "Chopiniana". When Swoboda came to the mazurka, the tempo was dropped to an excruciatingly slow pace. An irate Russian dancer, Theodore Kosloff, in the audience, stood up and shouted 'Presto'. It was a disgraceful incident resulting in Swoboda resigning. Muriel Stuart from the Pavlowa company, favored by the opposition group finished the season with several 'pop' ballets in "Faust" and "Thais".

We were now and then engaged to do some special supering parts for extra money. We were not prepared for the treatment we received in "Fidelio" from the German singer Frieda Leider; appearing in a dual role, she

sang a beautiful Lenore to the audience in her best voice and backstage she spat and flung curses at the dancers for merely being in her presence. We were exceedingly grateful to Mme Leider for we never had to super in her operas after that night.

Supering in the opera was a bore but now and then we were paid extra for it and it depended on the artists one was working with, if it was Mary Garden, Eva Turner, Marian Claire or Edith Mason, then it was a great pleasure. Garden we all adored and would do anything she wished just to be near her on stage. There was an aura about her and just watching her was a lesson in Dramatics. Probably our most impressive supering part was in "Parsifal" - 'carrying the bier' - when called for volunteers we heard 'carrying the bier'. In one act we had to kneel in prayer facing the audience for 45 minutes without flickering an eyelash. During that scene Rene Maison stood facing us while the angel chorus sang above our heads in the flys. "Parsifal" began at 1:45 in the afternoon and went until 5, when the audience left for dinner and returned at 7 to remain until 11 o'clock. Every door in the theatre was padded to avoid any kind of noise and strict silence was demanded everywhere backstage. This was a truly fantastic experience.

During my first year there were many new singers besides Olszewska. Leider from Germany, Eva Turner from England, Margherita Salvi from Spain and a group of Americans, including Hilda Burke, Marion Claire, Alice Mock and Coe Glade. In the male section, were Alexander Kipnis, Vanni Marcoux and Antonio Cortis who was later killed in the Spanish civil war.

Special on that last season at the Auditorium was a very special production of "The Tales of Hoffman". It was an extravagant production with seven full stage rehearsals complete with costumes, lights, orchestra and makeup. Marian Claire, Helen Freund and Irene Pavlowska and I do not remember the men. There was a lovely waltz for the ballet and while not too important for us, every small bit was considered of utmost importance to the final performance.

Eva Turner, the great English soprano, was introduced to the public in "The Marriage of Figaro" that same year. Charles Moor, our English Director, had precise ideas for using

the ballet, not in dance, but in mime parts arranged (almost choreographed) to definite phrases and musical beat. We were elegantly dressed with a Maestro conducting every step we took.

Mary Garden did several important performances of Honegger's Opera "Judith". I had a very prominent supering part along with Muriel Stuart in the scene where she dramatically crossed the stage to commit murder. "Thais" was always her biggest drawing card for the public and in this Opera, was Jose Mojica, the Mexican star who recently died in the Honduras disaster. Mojica was a very glamorous star for the ladies, and left our company in 1929 for a career in the movies. In the 40's he became a priest in Peru for many years. Garden was the great exponent of French Opera and not since her days have we had really great French opera.

The final performance in the Auditorium was "Romeo and Juliet" with Edith Mason and Charles Hackett singing their heart's out. This opera had opened the Auditorium in the first place with Patti. Back in the 20's I had heard a concert in a movie house in Helena, Montana with Mason, so this closing performance had a special meaning for me. As did another performance a few years later with Garden singing her farewell in "Pelleas and Melisande" in Boston. We had all asked to super that night for the privilege of hearing her at close range. It was after this performance that I had asked her if she had remembered receiving a large bouquet of Helena violets after her "Thais" back in 1920. She was gracious enough to say she most certainly did and gave me the autographed picture that I now treasure.

The opera opening night at the Wacker Drive house on November 4, 1929 was "Aida" with Rosa Raisa, Cyrena Van Gordon and Fromicki. Mr. Novikoff, our new ballet Master worked for six weeks choreographing the ballet which was extremely intricate and elaborate. He himself, danced the

lead that night, and at the time, we felt he was much too old to be dancing. We found out later that he was only 41 years old at the time; much too young to retire from the stage but he had a heart condition from years of lifting Pavlowa about the world.

In "Aida" the dancers' bodies were painted a purplish-terra cotta color which we had to wear off, rather than wash off. Afterwards, we found another makeup that was not so durable.

After this opening, ballets came at us in rapid order. In taht first week we had Claudia Muzio in "La Traviata" with John Charles Thomas and Tito Schipa; Alice Mock and Mary McCormic in "Romeo and Juliet"; "Tristan and Islode" with Frieda Leider; and "Travatore" with Muzio again. These productions were great with great casts, but people were none too happy with the Theatre. Backstage was more comfortable and spacious but the rapport with the front of the house was not at all what we had been used to at the Auditorium.

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